YET ANOTHER CANTERBURY TALE

A Film-Text

Bernard Sharratt

New Crisis Quarterly

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CANTERBURY TALE

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Though each can be read independently,
these NCQ publications, taken together,
comprise a single hyper-text collection
(well, sort of).

YET ANOTHER CANTERBURY TALE

a film-text
for pseudo-scholars

Bernard Sharratt

New Crisis Quarterly
2015

NEW CRISIS QUARTERLY

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First published 2015

ISBN : 978-1-910956-21-2

For
my fellow
pseudo-scholars
everywhere

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This film-text was not written with actual film production in mind. Though it plays with a variety of cinematic genres, it is primarily intended to be read and imagined. The text is designed so that it can easily be supplemented with on-line images of the specified sites and scenes of Canterbury.

It should perhaps be remarked that it was written during the invasion of Canterbury by various events and conferences celebrating the 450th anniversary of Christopher Marlowe's birth in 2014. It was offered to visiting academic friends largely as a kind of tongue-in-cheek guide to the city and to some of my favourite bits of it. Note that a prize of £1 million is indeed, it seems, available to anyone who proves, to the sober satisfaction of the scholarly community, that Marlowe wrote Shakespeare's works. But beware, gentle reader, the subtle seductions of apparent scholarship.

A film-text is a particularly suitable form for the 'New Crisis Quarterly' imprint, since that name revives the title of an extremely short-lived periodical whose first, only, and final issue appeared in 1984, under the guise of my *The Literary Labyrinth*. Its editorial programme was to publish reviews of imagined books I didn't feel I had the time actually to write, so its readers were cheerfully invited, if so inclined, to write those works themselves. In the same spirit, reading a film-text means that most of the work of imagining the film can be done by you, which is part of the fun of writing them. Other film-texts in this 'city' series are set in Athens, Budapest, Prague, Rome, and Venice.

B. S.
1st April
2015

Title sequence:

EXT. LATE MAY. MID-MORNING, SUNNY.
CANTERBURY BUS STATION.

LAURA, attractive 20-ish American student, arrives on the London coach, with a light backpack.

Credits over rapid cuts:

She walks to a small bed&breakfast (Greyfriars), registers, dumps her backpack and immediately makes her way back through the streets to the Cathedral, and stands in front of the impressive gateway.

Credits end.

1. EXT. OUTSIDE CHRIST CHURCH GATE.

Laura is standing looking at the cathedral gateway.

A point-of-view shot pans across the long date inscription on the gate. She deciphers it—

LAURA (*to herself, but audibly:)*
Hoc Opus Constructum Est Anno Domini
Millesimo Quingentesimo Septimo. *Mmm*. 1507.

ALAN, 20-ish, British, attractive, is now standing next to her, not quite by chance, since he is eying her appreciatively. He quietly intervenes:

ALAN
It's wrong, of course. Should really be 1517.
Or even 1935.

LAURA:
I'm sorry. *(dismissive Americanism)*

ALAN *(undeterred)*
That's all right, most people can't read it at all.
But it should read 1517. There's a missing *decimo*.
And the inscription actually dates from 1935.
As does much of the gate. See those turrets. Fake.
Well, reconstruction. The originals were knocked down
in the 19th century, so that a local bank manager
could see the clock on the cathedral tower.
Never trust your eyes in Canterbury.
I'm Alan, by the way.

LAURA (*wary, but amused)*
And should I trust you?

ALAN (*self-mocking*)
Absolutely. Hundred per cent.
Completely trustworthy English gentleman,
salt of the earth, courteous, polite, knowledgeable.
I'd completely recommend myself, no hesitation.
I'm a shepherd, by the way.
Though I'm off-duty at the moment.

LAURA
Er, you have a sheepdog?
And you're touting for business.

ALAN
A gentleman doesn't tout. He graciously offers himself
as an escort, a companion, a fount of local knowledge.
But only when it's a nice sunny day and he happens to
have a free afternoon. And a shepherd is someone
who officially helps visitors to the cathedral.
Very quaint term. How come you read Roman
numerals?—it's a dying skill. Like most skills.
People normally just take a photograph and,
you know, 'move on'. American?

LAURA (*exaggerated accent)*
Yep. Authentic American tourist. Seeing Europe
with wide innocent eyes, naively swallowing any bullshit
offered by the locals. Yessiree. —Except that I have a
degree in Renaissance studies and I know it says 1507.
So what's wrong with the date? Difficult to believe
it was just a slip of the chisel, thirty feet wide.

ALAN
Ah, a scholar. Well, it's an interesting story—
But I'm keeping you from actually seeing the cathedral,
aren't I? —though I could offer you a coffee inside
the precincts, with an excellent view of the cathedral,
and a fine tale as well. Cheaper, and nicer,
than Starbucks, too. Yes? Of course, you'll have to pay
to get in, but I'll pay for the coffee. Deal?

LAURA *(laughs)*
How can I resist? A free coffee and a Canterbury Tale.

At the gateway, Alan enters by the small side gate, with his pass.
Laura goes to the main gate, but also shows a pass
which gets her in free. They meet at the far side of the gate.

ALAN
That's not fair. Why did you get in free?
We need the money, after all.
But I still have to pay for the coffees, I suppose.

LAURA
I'm here for a conference, which meets inside the
precincts, so I have a free pass for the duration.
It starts this afternoon. Do I still get the free coffee,
—and the tale?

ALAN
Of course.

2. EXT. OUTSIDE CANTERBURY WEST
RAILWAY STATION.

A tall man (STRANGER) dressed all in black,
with a small shoulder bag, exits the station.

He is elderly, walks very slowly with a stick, wears dark sunglasses,
has a swarthy middle-eastern face and a grizzled grey beard.

He is seen asking directions and is pointed towards the city centre,
down Station Road. He starts walking, very slowly.

3. EXT. THE SMALL COFFEE KIOSK
WITHIN THE CATHEDRAL PRECINCTS.

A few tables on the grass. The Cathedral looms wonderfully.

Seated at one table is WB, late middle-aged, very short-sighted
despite thick glasses, studiously tapping away at the keyboard
of a small tablet computer in front of him.
He is not very competent with this technology, or anything else.
Some loose papers and an empty tea cup on the table.
A shoulder bag and a plastic shopping bag hang off the back
of his chair. A very old-fashioned and battered leather briefcase,
with a monogram 'W.B.' on it, leans against the table leg.
He is very preoccupied.

Laura is seated at the next table.
Alan brings over two coffees and a plate of small biscuits.
He sits. Laura sips her coffee, and grimaces.

LAURA
You said it would be nicer than Starbucks.

ALAN
No, I said the coffee was cheaper than Starbucks.
It's the location which is nicer — *(he gestures at the view of the cathedral)* —as you surely agree.

LAURA

Concedo. Now, what was wrong with my Latin, or with that inscription?

ALAN

Well, as I said, much of the gateway was rebuilt in the 1930s, having been pretty badly neglected for a few centuries. They knew there had once been a painted inscription, giving a date, across that part of the stonework. But it was completely worn away, illegible. So they did what conscientious restorers should do. They consulted the historians, and one of the finest local historians, William Somner, had written a detailed guide to Canterbury in the 1640s. In fact, it's arguably the first history and guide-book intended for tourists, for any English city. So they took the date from that book: 'Hoc Opus Constructum Est Anno Domini Millesimo Quingentesimo Septimo', says Somner. Which is what it now says on the gate. Unfortunately, there was a misprint in Somner's book — leaving out 'decimo'. Or he mis-read what was still left of the fading inscription. Never trust the documents.
All the archaeological evidence points to 1517 as the actual date, probably built to commemorate the death of young Prince Arthur—

A sudden gust of wind blows the papers off WB's table and he struggles to catch them. Laura springs up and chases them. One blows onto the path up to the entrance into the gift shop, where three local teenagers are lounging about. They hand the paper to Laura, who collects the rest and takes them to WB, who is pathetically grateful, flustered and embarrassed.

WB

(a marked German accent but good if stilted English)
I am so very grateful. There is a lot of work in those papers, and I would be most devastated to lose them. Thank you so much, thank you so very much.

WB takes the papers and stuffs them into his briefcase, then tries to turn off the tablet computer, which he finally does, and puts it in the shoulder-bag.

He picks up the shoulder-bag and shopping bag.

He anxiously checks that he has paid for his tea.

He warmly shakes Laura's hand, then Alan's, then nods a thanks to the three youths, and sets off — leaving the battered briefcase behind him. Alan spots it.

ALAN
Sir, you've left your briefcase.

WB *(even more flustered):*
I am so very hopeless. Thank you, thank you.
That is the most valuable of all. Irreplaceable.
(almost a weak joke:) Might even be worth one million dollars, I am told. I am an idiot. Thank you, thank you.

He gathers his belongings together again and goes towards the doorway into the shop.

The three teenagers have overheard the remark about a million dollars and exchange glances. They wait a few moments and then follow him through the automatic doors into the gift shop.

LAURA
Enough coffee. Right, Mr Shepherd,
you can tell me any more tales *inside* the cathedral.
I want to see it properly.

ALAN
Ah, you'd need ten years for that.
But I'll show you one or two of my favourite spots.
OK?

4. EXT. THE WESTGATE TOWERS.

The Stranger is standing looking at the Westgate,
and then pensively down into the river flowing by it.

Then he walks slowly on, into the city.

5. INTERIOR OF THE CATHEDRAL.

Laura and Alan are standing in the space known as the Martyrdom.

Alan lets her take it in. Then, slightly mockingly:

ALAN

This is where all the tourists come, of course,
the spot where Thomas Becket was horrendously hewn
to death by four irascible knights, *not* acting on kingly
orders, of course. Murder in the cathedral.
The frisson of History. *(pause)* But, again it's mostly
a kind of fake. In 1170, this part of the cathedral
was nothing like it is now—there were several chapels,
on two layers, with various walls separating them,
which have all been knocked down to create this open
space, 'The Martyrdom'. And of course there wasn't
a modern altar, still less some wrought-iron sword-cross
hanging on the wall. There was the door into the cloister
(points to it) and those steps up into the sanctuary.
And that's about all that's left of the last things
the unfortunate Thomas Becket ever saw.

LAURA

So why have you brought me here? I thought
you were going to show me *your* favourite spots.

ALAN

I am. Look behind you, next to the door.

He takes her over to the tomb of Archbishop John Pecham.

ALAN

My favourite tomb in the whole place. John Pecham, archbishop 1279 to 1292—the only Franciscan friar ever to be made Archbishop of Canterbury.
I suspect it was because, as a good Franciscan, he had argued that the church should be poor — so they put him in charge of the richest diocese in England. Take that! But he was also a philosopher, arguing with Aquinas over the eternity of the world. And a poet, a lovely long poem about a nightingale. Above all, he was a scientist.

LAURA *(slightly sceptical)*

What kind of a scientist—in the 13th century?

ALAN

A good one. He wrote the standard text-book on optics, on eyesight and light, which was still being taught in Oxford in the 17th century. It was called *De Perspectiva* and was studied by Leonardo and half the artists of the Renaissance, and by Newton and half the scientists of the early Royal Society. We now think he was wrong about how eyesight actually works, but he was a pioneer in the geometrical physics of light, and without him, and a few others, we wouldn't have had spectacles, telescopes, microscopes, and the rest. So anyone who wears glasses, or just watches films or television, owes him a debt. Umberto Eco's character in *The Name of the Rose*, William of Baskerville, is partly based on him — you've seen the film? Not bad for a wooden effigy, eh? —And of course during his time as archbishop here, he would have seen some of the most glorious uses of light ever devised, the stained glass in the cathedral — my next favourite stop—

Sudden cut to black and white film. Film noir mode.

6. INT. A CAFÉ. UPSTAIRS.

MARLOWE, a Humphrey Bogart semi-look-alike,
in a creased trench-coat and a battered trilby hat,
is seated at a table near a window. Bright sunny day outside.

Several dead coffee cups in front of him.

He is looking out at old tiled rooftops across the other side of a street.

Camera moves to a medium close-up on his lined and weary face,
as his gravelly Voice-Over begins:

MARLOWE VOICE-OVER
It was just another day at the office. Except that I didn't have an office any more. Only my usual seat in the café upstairs, looking out over those cold wet shiny roofs of the old town, and wondering if I could get away with a quick smoke in the café john. It was going to be another empty unpaid day—But then : I saw her reflection in that drizzly window, that stunning red dress, all contours and curves, and the low-cut abyss of her … — and then she spoke, in a low husky voice, like some kind of sweet cream was slithering slowly down her luscious throat —

Camera refocusses: tall blonde, RED, very willowy, is standing at his table. She leans over to him, revealingly, as the camera pulls back to show a busy café. (Café above Waterstone's bookshop.)

RED *(luscious voice)*
Mr Marlowe? Mr Philip Marlowe, Private Investigator?

MARLOWE
Come right in, pull up a chair, ignore the other clients.

RED *(sits)*
Mr Marlowe, I need your assistance. But it's a strange case, and a long story. Are you interested?

MARLOWE
I'm always interested, for seven dollars a day,
plus expenses.

RED
That's pretty cheap these days, Mr Marlowe.

MARLOWE
I'm a pretty cheap guy, and I live in the past.
But my expenses can be pretty high.
(gestures to the littered table)

RED
It all started many years ago, *many* years ago
— 30th May 1593, to be exact.

MARLOWE
Nothing started that long ago. That's older than LA.
Older than my wise-cracks.

MARLOWE VOICE-OVER
(*as she inaudibly tells her story*:)
And so she span, or maybe spun, this fantastical tale,
of how a young poet and playwright, who may or may
not have been some other poet or playwright,
maybe even a great poet or playwright, and may
or may not have been a government agent, a state
stooge or a patsy, may or may not have been killed
in a drunken brawl in a low dive in some place called
Deepford—or maybe it was just meant to look that way.
I let her voice caress my ears, her tongue insinuate itself
sensuously into my eager orifices — — while I totally
lost track of all the crazy irrelevant details, the ins and
outs, the exits and entrances, the whole sordid business
of writing plays for money, the betrayals, deceits, twists,
turns, come-uppances and peripeteias, the bad plots and
OTT characters. Suddenly I found myself asking:

MARLOWE
Why me? Why you? Of all the crummy caffs…

RED
Mr Marlowe, I have a PhD to finish, and I've reached
a blank wall. What we in Europe call a *cul-de-sac*.

MARLOWE:
Like a dead end, huh.

RED
I need a professional, a sleuth, a private dick.

MARLOWE
I'll think about that later. You've tried the Wiki Agency,
Goggle Inc., the big boys? Why come to me?

RED
I was watching you through the window, your sad tired
reflection. You looked so completely unemployed,
so unpaid, that you're probably cheap, I thought.
I was right. And this could be worth a million bucks.
I don't want to share that with the big boys.
They'd just screw me. Interested now?

MARLOWE VOICE-OVER
I looked out of the window, puzzled. How had she
perched on those roof-tiles to watch me, I wondered.
She explained there was some kind of prize if she,
or was it me, her private eye, her hired hack, her dick,
could prove that this guy was also the other guy,
or pretended to be this other guy, or maybe the other
guy was him, or maybe they were both some other guy.
It sure didn't make much sense. But I took the job,
anyway. Not for a share of the million bucks—I could
always screw that out of her later, just like the big boys
—but because of that red dress and those sinuous
curves inside it. I knew there wasn't much to go on,
or maybe too much. The clues were all pretty cold,
the witnesses mostly dead by now, I guessed.

So it was going to be a lot of expenses.
I paid for my tea and hit those mean wet streets.
Not sure what I was looking for, except an excuse to see that red dress again, preferably with her no longer in it.

Pull back from the black & white camera view-finder to reveal, as the screen now changes to colour, an entire crew of young student film-makers crowded into the corner of the café, with lights, boom mike, etc, etc. Marlow and Red relax. She is actually wearing a green dress.

TONY *(director)*
Cut. Pretty good, pretty good. Last take today, OK. It's too close to lunch.

Tony waves reassuringly across to the café manageress, Eileen, behind the counter, who is tapping her watch pointedly.

TONY:
It's OK, Eileen, we're just packing up.
Be gone in a minute.

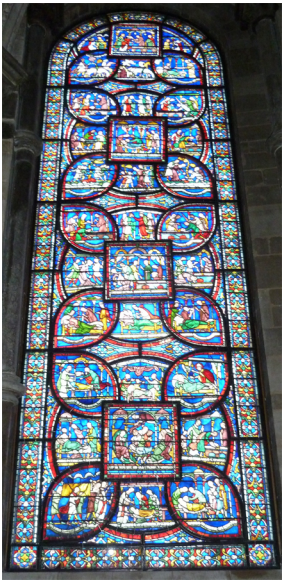
BELINDA *(continuity, assistant, etc. etc.)*
Tony, *wet* roof-tiles? You will remember?

TONY
That's fine, love. We'll sort it out in post-production. Eileen wouldn't let us run a hosepipe. OK, pack up everybody. Eileen needs the tables for early lunch.

GRUMPY CUSTOMER
At last! Leave us in peace. Bloody film students.

7. INSIDE THE CATHEDRAL

Alan and Laura are standing in front of the final window in the Miracles sequence. The Camera pans slowly down the entire glass window, then refocusses to include Alan and Laura.



ALAN

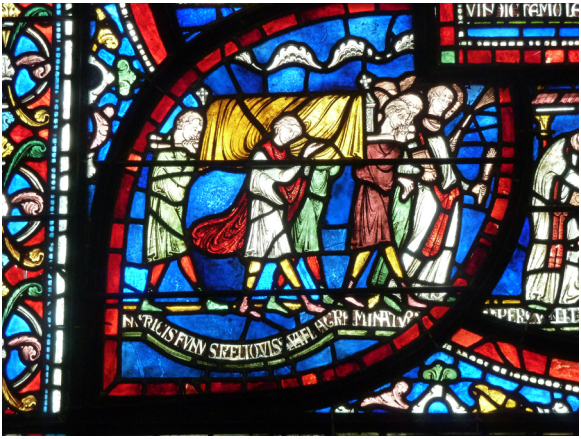
OK, we've just come past the Miracle windows, where the pilgrims would have shuffled along in an orderly queue, heading for the shrine. As they passed the windows, a monk would have pointed out to them the various miracles. Got a broken leg, mate? See that one up there, second pane from the left— Becket cured him. So, you're afflicted with some kind of scrofula, are you, luv? Don't worry— look up there, top right: Becket curing someone just like you. You're blind, are you, old fella? Sorry, sir, I know you can't see it, but Becket cured a blind person just like you. — And so on. But now we come to the crunch. The very last window the prilgrims would have had explained to them, before they were admitted to the actual shrine, just round the bend, is this one, and especially the bottom section of it.

Camera shows bottom section of the nine segments. Lingers a moment.

LAURA:
I can't make head nor tail of it.

ALAN
That's because it's arranged in an intriguing way. Not a simple narrative order, but one that just *has* to be explained. So there's a decent tip for the monk who explains it to you. There are Latin inscriptions, which clarify the tale, but your average pilgrim would have needed a monk to translate them. It's all about an aristocrat's household attacked by the plague. Sir Jordan Fitzeulf's. He had actually been a friend of Becket. *(he points:)* So, the story begins in the lower left corner, where we see the funeral of the first plague victim, the nurse Britonis: the coffin under a pall is carried on a bier by four men, a priest in an embroidered stole, with holy-water sprinkler, walking in front.

(close up on that segment, below).



Then, next along the bottom row, *(close-up below)* is the second victim: the death of Sir Jordan's son William, aged ten. The sorrowing parents stoop over his bier, which a priest is sprinkling with holy water.

But in the right hand corner, *(close-up below)* pilgrims from Canterbury arrive with the holy water of St Thomas. The child's mother lifts his head while Jordan pours the holy water into his mouth.

Now we switch to the top *left* corner, here *(close-up below)*. Jordan receives from his wife some coins brought in a bowl, and places two in each hand of the child, to be given as a thanksgiving to the saint.

In the middle image, *(close-up below)* the dead child is brought back to life by the holy water of Thomas, and sits up and feeds, with the parents at the bed-ends giving thanks. But here the inscription is important: it reads: HIC PVER ERIGITVR SANVS NEC MARTIR ADITVR. How's your Latin now?

LAURA

That's pretty primitive Latin, you know.
But, roughly, Here the boy rises, healed,
‘sanus’ — ‘ nec martir aditur’— but the Martyr,
Becket, is not approached? Eh? Meaning?

ALAN

It means that they didn't go, as promised,
to the shrine to give thanks, and they didn't
donate the coins from the earlier scene.
So what does Becket do? In the next image
(close-up below) St Thomas himself, cross in hand,
appears to a sleeping leper named Gimp
and orders him to warn Jordan of what will happen
if he fails to perform his vow.

Of course, the image of Thomas isn't original —
they were all obliterated at the Reformation.
Now, we move to the *middle* row of images:
(close up below) the parents come to Gimp,
who sits up to give his message. Which they get
—but still don't act on.

And so comes the crunch lesson:
Thomas has been ignored, the promise not kept,
they still haven't said thank you, or given
the promised offering—so, right in the centre
of the whole composition—*(close-up below)*

— since they ignored the leper's warning the elder son
of the household now dies. And just so there's no
doubt, St Thomas himself, armed with a sword, hovers
above the son's corpse, while the rest of the family are
too ill to rise from their chairs.

So, finally: *(close up below)* the message strikes home, literally — and the parents at last make the promised offering of gold and silver at the shrine.

So, how's that for the Canterbury tale I promised you? And what tip do I get —?

LAURA

It's astonishing. The vindictive little —! !
And Jordan was a *friend* of Becket!

ALAN

Ah, but remember where this window is located.
If on your pilgrimage you've been praying for a miracle,
and, while shuffling along in the queue back there,
you've been promising you'll make some suitable
offering, you'd better damn well not forget it,
I'm telling you. After that, you may go to the shrine!

LAURA

I see your point!

ALAN

But now, a warning of my own: if we don't get lunch
pretty soon, every place in town will be crowded.

Ten thousand tourists a day all need feeding,
so best to eat early. There's a couple of decent places
worth seeing. And we can come back to the cathedral
this afternoon. OK? Canterbury may look like
a sleepy little town but it can get mighty busy.

8. EXT. THE RING ROAD ROUND CANTERBURY

Slow long travelling shot of a nose-to-tail traffic jam
on the ring road. Lots of impatient honking.

Among the cars, buses, etc. but not particularly noticeable
is a small truck with something covered in tarpaulin.

9. EXT. CANTERBURY HIGH STREET

The Stranger passes the Pilgrims Hostel on the High Street.,
He pauses and looks in, but does not enter.

Alan and Laura pass him, but do not notice him,
as they enter the old Queen Elizabeth tea-rooms,
now a Café Nero.

10. INT. CAFÉ NERO.

The ground floor is fairly crowded.

ALAN
Let's just see if there's room upstairs before we order.
The best thing about this place is the decorated
plastered ceiling on the next floor. Elizabethan.

They go up the stairs. As they come out onto the first floor,
with scattered comfortable armchairs and the fine Tudor ceiling,
Alan stops suddenly.

ALAN

Oh, no. We're not staying. Look at that lot —
(he points to a group at a table). Canterbury's own Guerilla Theatre Troupe—a bunch of drama students, who this week are insisting on enacting some parody of Christopher Marlowe's death in every unsuspecting café and restaurant all over town. They call it 'Kit and the Old Bill'. Aaargh! They're just starting. Let's go. Quick.

LAURA

Spoilsport. I want to see them.

ALAN

I've seen them once too often. OK. We'll stay. Two minutes. But then we're going to find a pub where they can't disturb us.

Suddenly, the group spring into action, startling the other customers.

They take up standing positions around their table.

As the dialogue develops, they act with increasing aggression towards each other.

Customers are variously bemused, irritated, tolerant.

ANDY

Alas, poor slave! see how poverty jesteth in his nakedness! / The villain is bare and out of service, and so hungry, that I know / he would give his soul to the devil for a shoulder of mutton, though it were blood-raw.

CHRIS

How! my soul to the devil for a shoulder of mutton, though 'twere blood-raw! / Not so, good friend: / by our lady, I had need have it well roasted, / and good sauce to it, if I pay so dear.

BRIAN

But, Kit, here comes the Vintner,
Lucifer hisself, baying for your blood.
You owe him.

CHRIS

Hush! I'll gull him supernaturally.—
Come, sir Vinter. God be with you!

ERIC as Vinter comes over from another table.

ERIC

Soft, sir; a word with you.
I must yet have a goblet paid from you, ere you go.

CHRIS

I, a goblet, sir, I a goblet!—I scorn you;
and you are but a varmint. I a goblet! Search me.

ERIC

I mean so, sir, with your favour.

He searches Chris, but finds nothing, as Chris conjures a small goblet out of sight and hands it to Brian.

CHRIS

How say you now?

ERIC

I must say somewhat to your fellow.
— You, sir!

BRIAN

Me, sir! me, sir! search your fill.

Eric searches him, similar routine, Brian handing goblet to Chris.

Now, sir, you may be ashamed
to burden honest men with a matter of truth.

ERIC
Well, the one of you hath my goblet about you.

CHRIS
You lie — Sirrah you, I'll teach you
to impeach honest men —stand by —

They variously draw swords and daggers, flourishing them theatrically. Some customers are alarmed.

ANDY
My naked weapon is out. Quarrel! I will back thee.

DAMIEN comes over from another table to stand by Eric.

DAMIEN *(to Andy)*
How? Turn thy back and run?

ANDY
Fear me not?

DAMIEN
No, marry. I fear thee! Not.

ANDY *(to Brian)*
Let us take the law of our sides; let you begin.

BRIAN
I will frown at them and let them take it as they list.

ANDY
Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them;
which is disgrace to them, if they bear it.

ERIC
Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

ANDY
I do bite my thumb, sir.

DAMIEN
Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

CHRIS *(aside to Andy)*
Is the law on our side if I say ay?

ANDY *(aside to Chris)*
No.

CHRIS
No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir;
but I bite my thumb, sir.

DAMIEN
Do you quarrel, sir?

CHRIS
Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

DAMIEN
But if you do, sir, I am for you.
I serve as good a man as you.

ERIC
No better.

CHRIS:
Well, sir.

DAMIEN
You lie.

CHRIS
Draw, if you be men.
Ralph, remember thy swashing blow.

They all fight. Chris is apparently stabbed in the ear.
He falls to the ground, with lots of artificial blood.

ANDY

Godamercy, this strikes a man more dead
than a great reckoning in a little room!

They all drop out of character and take immensely theatrical bows.
Some desultory clapping.

GRUMPY CUSTOMER *(same as earlier)* :

Bloody drama students!

ALAN

Seen enough? They'll be taking a collection next.
Quick, there's a decent pub round the corner.

Alan and Laura rapidly leave down the stairs.

11. EXT. CANTERBURY HIGH STREET

The Stranger is paused by the Weavers building,
looking pensively down from the bridge into the river waters.

Alan and Laura quickly pass him, heading for St Radigund's.

He slowly resumes his walk down the High Street.

12. INT. ST RADIGUND'S PUB

The pub in St Radigund's is a genuine late medieval building.
Bare wooden tables, stools and benches.
We could be in the 14th century.

Except that a TV is on in the corner, showing the local News.
But the sound is turned off.

The three teenagers from the cathedral cafe, Mike, Ned and Sam,
are seated at a table, with nearly empty beer glasses in front of them.
The battered briefcase with the monogram 'WB' is on the table.
The youths are semi-drunk and angry with each other.

MIKE
So what the fuck are we going to do with it.

NED
We don't even know what the fuck it is.

SAM
It's some kind of code. Bet it's Top Secret, eh?
Some kind of spying thingie.

MIKE
How is that worth a million knicker?

SAM
Depends on who you can sell it to, ainitt.

NED
I need a refill. Your round, Mike.

MIKE
Fucking isn't. I bought the last one, last night.
It's Sam's round.

SAM
'Tisn't.

GRUMPY CUSTOMER *(same one again)*:
Will you lot shut it. I wanna hear the news.
Turn it up, Harry!

HARRY BAILLY, the barman, turns on the TV sound.

Alan and Laura enter, take seats, and look at menus,
just as the TV shows aerial footage of an enormous ocean-going yacht
moored in Dover Harbour, taking up half the mooring space.

REPORTER VOICE-OVER

—a rare UK visit by the reclusive Russian multi-billionaire, Sergei Oligov, who lives almost permanently at sea, protected on his fortress-like yacht, *Tamburlaine the Great,* named after the warlord from whom he claims descent. Mr Oligov began life as a Scythian shepherd, but in a surprising turn of fortune became the owner in the 1990s of half the State-owned mineral reserves of the old Soviet Union. Rumour has it that he now lives in constant fear of an assassination attempt by his former business partner and rival, Dimitri Kirilov. Despite that, Mr Oligov will be paying a flying visit to Canterbury later this afternoon, arriving by helicopter to attend a conference generously funded by Mr Oligov, on Christopher Marlowe as the real author of Shakespeare's plays, an obsession with Mr Oligov. Mr Kirilov just as passionately funds research to prove that Shakespeare was indeed Shakespeare. Mr Kirilov is not expected to attend.

GRUMPY CUSTOMER

Who the hell cares. Bloody Shakespeare. Poncey layabout. Can you find the cricket, 'Arry?

Harry switches channels, finds the cricket, turns the sound down.

SAM

So that's what it's about! Fucking Ruskies. Bet it's some kind of secret code they're really here for.

NED

You gonna try an' sell it to them, then, eh, Sam? Just get the drinks in.

MIKE

Yeah, top secret, worth a million—to the fucking Kremlin. Balls!

SAM

You never know. OK, OK, I'll get a round.

Sam goes to the bar and orders three pints.
Surreptitiously, he slips a powder into two of the glasses,
before he brings them back to the table.

Alan nudges Laura and points silently to the briefcase.

ALAN *(sotto voce)*
See if you can distract them. I'm going to grab
the briefcase and give it back to the old guy.
I'll make a dash for it. Meet me in the cathedral
coffee place in 20 minutes. OK? —Ready?

Mike and Ned are downing their pints,
as Laura wanders over, at her most flirtatious.

LAURA
So, is nobody going to buy me a drink?
What does a girl have to do around here to get served?

SAM *(flustered)*
Er, sure, yep, it's my round. What you having?

LAURA
I wouldn't know. How about a pint of best bitter.

As Sam goes over to the bar to order, Mike and Ned have been
downing their spiked beer and both begin to look queasy.

MIKE
What the fuck's wrong with this muck?

NED
Tastes fuckin' weird.

They get up, but sway on their feet.

Alan comes over casually, then grabs the briefcase from the table
and sprints for the door.

Sam spots him but has a pint in his hand by now and hesitates.

Laura knocks the pint all over Sam, drenching him,
as Mike and Ned try to come over and grapple with him.

NED *(slurred)*
What you put in our drinks, eh?

MIKE
You want that fucking codie thingie for yourself, eh—

They scuffle, but Sam breaks free and chases after Alan.

LAURA
Sorry, gotta go — *(to Harry)* They're paying. 'Bye.

She leaves, as Mike and Ned struggle to stay upright, totally doped.

GRUMPY CUSTOMER
Bloody yobbos. Can't even hold their drink.

13. EXT. BACK STREETS.

Alan sprints through the alley behind St Andrew's church and then
down Northgate to the King's School entrance into the precincts,
waving his Shepherd's pass to a burly security porter
as he dashes through the gate.

Sam, panting, almost catches up with him
but is firmly stopped by the porter.

PORTER
Oh no you don't, m'lad. You're not coming in here like that. Covered in drink! Young thug.

14. EXT. MERCERY LANE. CONTINUOUS.

The Stranger stops in Mercery Lane,
admiring the wooden effigies of several devils
carved on the roof beams of a shop, just above head height.

Mike and Ned stagger past him, looking wretched, then start to vomit.

Stranger steps gingerly past them

STRANGER *(politely*
Pardonnez moi.

15. EXT. CATHEDRAL COFFEE KIOSK.

Alan is waiting at the precincts coffee kiosk,
with the briefcase on the table in front of him .

Laura, slightly out of breath, soon joins him.

LAURA
That was fun!

ALAN
I've had an idea. Do you have the programme
for your conference?

LAURA *(consults smart phone)*:
Yep. What do you want that for?

ALAN
I reckon 'WB', whatever that stands for, is one of the
conference speakers and he was preparing his talk.
If we can find a name with the initials W.B.
we can track him down and give him back his briefcase.

LAURA *(scans the programme)*
Got him, I think. Professor Emeritus Dr Walter Brecht,
University of Malta, Valletta. He's giving a panel paper
on 'The lost dramas of Bishop Bale'.

ALAN
Bishop Bale?

LAURA
John Bale. Bilious Bale. He wrote the oldest known
historical verse drama in English, on King John,
and lots of other plays, most of which seem to have
disappeared. He was briefly Bishop of Ossory,
in Ireland, but ended up in Canterbury and died here.
Late 1560s. Ferocious anti-Catholic and polemicist.
So known as Bilious Bale. Not sure what a paper
on John Bale is doing at a conference on Marlowe,
but he was, I suppose, a Canterbury playwright,
in a sense.

ALAN
So, can we find Professor W.B.?

LAURA
As a speaker, he may well be staying
at the conference centre, here in the precincts.

15. EXT. CHRIST CHURCH GATEWAY

Stranger stands admiring the cathedral gateway. He reads the date.

STRANGER *(to himself):*
1507? *Mm.* Doesn't look like it.
Twentieth-century restoration, surely.

The film suddenly goes back into black & white.

16. EXT. MARLOWE ARCADE.

Marlowe is being filmed by the student film crew in the area outside the entrance to the Marlowe Arcade. [Whitefriars Arcade]

Cut to (black&white) point of view shot, as the camera tilts up to show the old 'Marlowe Arcade' sign.

MARLOWE VOICE-OVER

That had looked promising. All day I'd been trying to get a bead on this dead guy, or alive guy—
well, not alive now, just maybe not quite so dead as when people said he was. I'd checked out his score in the local library. A coupla trashy pot-boilers, *Massacre in Paris*, *Tamburlaine the Great,* some sordid anti-semitic tract, *The Jew of Malta*, and a crazy farce called *Faust*. Not much of a record. Just a hack, like the rest of us. But I needed to know more, a lot more. I didn't have time for a third degree, but maybe I'd be lucky here, the Marlowe Arcade, some tunnel named after him. I took a deep breath and plunged in. I wanted to make a few phone calls, the British Library, GCHQ, the NSA—they'd know more than they would tell me, of course, but it was worth a try. Except that I couldn't find any of those nice red phone boxes I remembered from England in the old days. Does nobody make phone calls these days?

Travelling point of view shot as Marlowe walks to the far end of the arcade.
Camera reframes as an over-the-shoulder shot as Marlowe stops in front of the Apple computer shop.

MARLOWE VOICE-OVER

Huh, Apple, eh. The first temptation. So, like all the other moolahs, I drooled in front of the window, watering my eyes. Desire, desire! Then I thought of that red dress again. Dammit, I was on expenses and I needed a private eye phone. She was sure gonna pay through the nose for one here.

Suddenly, WB comes into shot from the arcade entrance, approaching Marlowe. He taps Marlowe on the shoulder.

WB
Excuse me, sir, I wonder if you could help me?
I seem to have a lost a valuable briefcase—

MARLOWE *(snarls at him)*
Do I look like some kind of damned detective?

TONY *(director)*
Cut! —Cut!

The screen switches to full colour.
WB is looking bewildered
as he registers the camera and crew for the first time.

TONY
Look, I'm really sorry, sir, but we can't help you.
We're shooting a film.

MARLOWE
So scram, Buster.

TONY
OK, everbody, back to startng positions please.
Let's see if we can get this right.

WB retreats. Camera briefly shows him walking disconsolately past the Canterbury Tales visitor attraction, asking passers-by about his briefcase. He makes his way back towards the cathedral gate.

17. INSIDE CATHEDRAL.

The Stranger has reached the entrance to the nave.
He undergoes a cursory security examination of his bag.

ATTENDANT *(middle-aged helpful lady)*
Welcome to Canterbury Cathedral, sir. Would you like a ground plan? In what language, sir?

As a token security measure, she ruffles automatically through his bag.

And discovers a Palestinian scarf, a kuffiyeh. And a small urn.

She looks cautiously and quizzically at the Stranger.

STRANGER
I don't suppose you have a guide in Arabic?
So, English would be fine. *(She looks at the urn)*
That is — let us say — a souvenir, a keepsake.

She waves him through into the nave itself,
but then speaks a little furtively into a small walkie-talkie.

18. INT. CONFERENCE CENTRE FOYER

In the foyer of the Conference Centre within the precincts.
Alan and Laura are with WB, who now has his briefcase back.

WB
I am so very grateful. I don't know what I would have done without it. It's crucial to my presentation later.

LAURA
On Bishop Bale?

WB

Er, no, not quite. *(cautiously looks around, then speaks quietly but excitedly)* You won't tell anyone, I hope.
But let me explain—Bale died in 1564, in Canterbury, and his plays disappeared. But I had a hunch, you see. He was friendly with the first headmaster of the new King's School, and his own son went there. There's also some evidence of plays being performed at the school. So I wondered if Bale had perhaps left the manuscripts of his plays to the school. I started to look through the surviving papers of all those who had been at the school during the 16th and early 17th century, to find any references to Bale's plays, and what might have happened to them One man, Ralph Groves, left an enormous number of papers—he was an attorney in Canterbury from the 1590s, and the town clerk till his death in 1635. Now, in 1614 Groves received a letter from another Kings School alumnus, an old friend, Benjamin Carie. Carie was a career churchman, who ended up as a chaplain to King James I—but in 1613 he had converted to Roman Catholicism. It was quite a scandal. He never returned to England, but died in France, at the residence of Cardinal Du Perron, who was known to shelter English converts. He wrote the letter which I found from there, but the letter is in code, and it took me a long while to decipher it. I finally did it! *(pauses triumphantly)*

LAURA

Er, yes. But—what is the point?
What's it got to do with Bale?

WB

Sorry, no, nothing at all to do with John Bale.
But, you see, both Groves and Carie had been at the Kings School with Christopher Marlowe in the 1570s, and both had also been at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, with him in the 1580s.

So they had known him very well. Groves also knew
John Cranford, who married Marlowe's sister.
And the point of the letter is that *(dramatic pause)*
Carie says he has met 'Kit of Canterbury' in France
— —in 1614!!

LAURA *(sinks in)*
So Marlowe really *hadn't* died in 1593—Wow!

WB
But Carie tells Groves that Marlowe is now dying,
and won't last long. And just two years later, in 1616,
William Shakespeare suddenly retires from writing plays.
The flow had dried up! You see, you see!

ALAN
Pretty impressive.

LAURA
And worth the million dollar prize from Oligov, yes?

WB
Yes, perhaps, perhaps. I would dearly like that kind
of money. I have this huge project to complete,
been working on it for years—I've told the conference
people about it, in strict secrecy, and I'm presenting
the evidence at the opening session this evening.
But you will keep quiet about it till then, yes.

LAURA
Of course. I wouldn't miss this for the world!
But we must get a guest ticket for Alan to hear it all!

19. INT. CATHEDRAL CRYPT.

The Stranger is standing in the small chapel at the far end of the crypt.
He waits a moment till he is alone, as visitors drift away.
He puts on his Palestinian kuffiyeh and starts to untwist
the top of the small urn.

A black&white CCTV camera shows him in the crypt.

SECURITY GUARD (VOICE-OVER)
Bill, Tim, the crypt right now. Summat odd.

The Stranger slowly scatters a small handful of grey-white dust onto the floor, in front of the altar.

Bill and Tim, cathedral security guards, both big and burly, rush into the crypt, following instructions on ear-pieces.

They grab the Stranger, who does not resist.

BILL *(anxious)*
Now, now, sir, what's all this?

TIM *(very wary)*
What are you doing, sir?.
And what's this grey powder?

BILL *(now petrified)*
Something chemical, eh?
Is it Sarin? Or poison?—Or something?

STRANGER
I am most sorry if I have caused offence, or anxiety. I was trying to follow the instructions of a dear dead friend. These are her ashes.

BILL *(relieved)*
You were scattering her ashes?

STRANGER
I am an archaeologist, Dr Abdullah Said, from Palestine. My good friend, Dr Sheila Williams, was also an archaeologist, who worked in Palestine for several decades. Tragically, she died a month ago, after being gassed during a demonstration in Jerusalem.

She asked me to return her remains to her beloved home city, Canterbury, and to scatter her ashes somewhere appropriate. I have been looking for somewhere suitable all over the city, and finally this seemed a proper place.

TIM
But it's not allowed, sir.

STRANGER
I am truly sorry. So many others are buried here. It seemed perhaps one more would make little difference.

BILL
I'm just glad it's not any of this nasty chemical stuff. *(pause)*. Tell you what, sir, there's a memorial garden just near the cathedral. We can take you there. It's not strictly allowed there, either, but I'm sure you'll be discreet, won't you —

STRANGER
Of course. I am most grateful.

19. EXT. THE RING ROAD, STILL JAMMED.

There is the sound of a helicopter flying in the near distance.

Medium shot of the truck, still stuck in traffic, between the St George's roundabout and the Burgate.

The truck driver is peering up, trying to locate the helicopter.

DRIVER *(Russian)*
Grebanyy sputnikovoy navigatsii !

DRIVER'S MATE
Povernut' nalevo, zatem rezkiy pravyy.

The driver wrenches the truck out of the traffic jam,
and barges his way forward, using the truck as a battering ram,
turns left into the Burgate and then turns right,
into the trades entrance of the cathedral precincts.

20. EXT. CATHEDRAL PRECINCTS.

Bill, Tim, and Stranger are on the path leading to the Memorial Garden. Bill points the Stranger towards the garden gate.

BILL
Just through there, sir. Very nice and quiet there.

STRANGER
Thank you. You have been most kind. And goodbye.

TIM *(to Bill, laughing)*
You didn't think we'd have any proper terrorism here, in Canterbury cathedral, did you!

Just as: — the truck crashes through the security barrier
at the cathedral gate and comes directly towards Bill and Tim.

It skews to a halt near them. The Driver's Mate and the Driver
scramble out of the cab, go to the rear of the truck,
and uncover a rocket launcher from under the tarpaulin—

just as: — a large helicopter comes into view overhead,
heading to land in the King's School quadrangle.

The two men start to aim the rocket launcher towards the helicopter.

Bill suddenly picks up a large stone, a piece of ornamental carving,
from the grass verge and hurls it at the rocket launcher.
It hits the man about to pull the trigger.
He spins round and the rocket fires off, not towards the helicopter
but towards Bell Harry, the central tower of the cathedral.

All watch agape as the heat-seeking missile narrowly misses Bell Harry and then circles the tower, trying to pick up the heat of the helicopter. (CGI, of course)

The helicopter hovers high above the truck and a burst of cannon-fire from the helicopter blows up the truck and the two men.
The missile now locks onto the heat of the explosion
and thuds into the remains of the blazing truck, exploding it further.

Bill and Tim have flung themselves to the ground and are unhurt.

Alan, Laura and WB are watching open-mouthed
from the entrance to the conference centre.

Alan takes a photo on his mobile phone as the truck explodes.

The helicopter, caught in the second blast, hovers unsteadily and then descends to land in the Memorial Gardens.

21. EXT. THE MEMORIAL GARDENS.

As the helicopter makes an emergency landing in the garden,
the Stranger calmly scatters ashes from the urn onto the grass.
He is used to such explosions and is wholly unruffled.

STRANGER
(he adapts Marlowe's translation of Ovid:)
Thy bones I pray may from this urn safe rest,
And may th'earth's weight thy ashes nought molest.

He stands with bowed head,
as numerous heavily-armed security personnel
scramble frantically out of the helicopter.

22. EXT. THE CLOISTERS.

Philip Marlowe is sitting in a corner of the cloisters,
being filmed. The film is in colour. The student film crew are visible.

MARLOWE *(talks direct to camera)*:
This was getting out of hand. As always. You start with
a minor homicide, some hood found in an alleyway,
and before you know it, down-town LA is littered with
corpses, all somehow connected, and your job is to tie
them all together, roping in the small fry while letting
the really big boys, the top corporations, the wealthy
bastard class, somehow wriggle off the hook, pleading
insanity or drug addiction, or just plain immunity.
Well, it wasn't going to be like that this time.
I was fed up chasing conspiracy theories.
I'd settle for a simple straight-forward conspiracy.
The Mafia. When two tribes go to war, the Baconians,
the Marlovians, with even the de Vere nutters joining in,
you can bet there's more at stake than a dodgy copyright
contract. This was a major tourism war, Stratford versus
Canterbury, to the death. Stratford had played all the
cards so far, but maybe Canterbury had the edge at last.
It was worth someone's while to invest a lot of dough
in that gamble. I'd tracked down a few minor Marlowe
figures in my time—the ghost of Jacob Marley, for a
start, and that Polish guy who used to tell horror stories
about the Congo—he lived around here some place,
Beckhamsbourne, or somewhere—but it was always
the money at the back of it. Call it a hunch, but this too
was gonna be one of the dark places on the earth pretty
soon, and I was going to have to get my feet wet again.
But first I needed to talk to that red dress,
and she seemed to have gone AWOL.
Maybe she'd realised I was the wrong guy after all,
the wrong name, the wrong spelling. It could be tough
when that happened. But I knew the corpses
would soon be piling up in the rain.
I just didn't see it coming that fast—

TONY *(exasperated)*
Cut. Cut. Damn, we can't use it. Did anybody else
hear that racket? There was just too much back-ground
noise. I think it all needs re-writing anyway.
Let's pack it in. A wasted afternoon.

23. INT. ST RADIGUND'S PUB.

Now alone, Grumpy Customer is watching the television news, which is showing a single static and blurred image of the exploded truck in the precincts.

REPORTER VOICE-OVER

—unfortunately, we have no other footage of the extraordinary events in Canterbury cathedral precincts this afternoon. But, in a further development, police have confirmed that they boarded a luxury yacht in Dover harbour, and found fifty or so East European young women. A spokesman for the owner, Mr Oligov, denied any implication of human trafficking. He is reported to have said: 'They're not even for import. Strictly for Mr Oligov's personal use. Which is OK, isn't it?' Police are, however, also reported to be investigating the possibly illegal possession of a small nuclear device, and are currently looking for Mr Oligov, whose whereabouts are unknown.

GRUMPY CUSTOMER

Harry, will you turn this damn thing off. Bloody BBC. Always sensationalising things. Guy invites a few girls onto his yacht, what's wrong with that, I say —

24. INT. CONFERENCE LECTURE HALL.

Oligov is on the platform, with an Aide next to him.

Sir Peter Drake, a distinguished nonentity, is at the podium. WB is nervously waiting at the side of the platform.

Alan and Laura are in the audience, as is Red, in her stunning green dress.

Throughout, the Aide translates quietly for Oligov.

DRAKE

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, conference
delegates, fellow Marlowe scholars. It gives me
great pleasure to introduce this opening session,
which, as you will have realised by now, has been
somewhat modified from the advertised schedule.
Always happens, eh! *(weak attempt at joke)*.
But for good reasons tonight. First, though,
an announcement on behalf of our generous sponsor.
Mr Oligov, as you know, does not himself speak
English, despite his passionate love of our literature.
So it falls to me to say that, in the light of his almost
miraculous escape from a vile assassination attempt
this afternoon, Mr Oligov, in grateful appreciation
for the role played by the cathedral personnel,
has immediately offered to buy the cathedral and
preserve it for future generations. *(Audience gasp.)*
The Dean and Chapter were most impressed
by this generous offer, and considered it carefully,
but unfortunately felt unable to accept it.
Mr Oligov has therefore offered instead one hundred
million — er, pounds? dollars? euros? *(looks towards aide,
who mouths dollars)*—er, dollars, towards the restoration
and conservation of the cathedral, with only a side-
chapel to be dedicated to the Oligov family tombs.
(Audience applauds, very uncertainly). Nor, we hope,
is that to be the end of Mr Oligov's expenditure today.
We have high expectations that he will shortly be
writing a cheque for one million, er, dollars.
Which is why we have asked Professor Walter Brecht
to make the opening presentation, instead of his paper
on John Bale. You will soon appreciate why.
Professor Brecht —

*WB comes to the podium and awkwardly arranges his papers.
He speaks very nervously.*

WB

Fellow delegates, scholars, Mr Oligov, chair, er —
Let me begin by explaining, that I had been intending to talk about the lost plays of John Bale, an interesting topic in its own right — but, yes, I have found, er, something more interesting. In researching the old students of the King's School, who might, I thought, have known something about those lost plays,
I came across a most interesting letter, from Benjamin Carie to Ralph Groves. Both these men had been at the Kings School, and at Corpus College, Cambridge, with Christopher Marlowe and knew him well. Let me show the letter to you, and then provide a brief commentary .

WB tries to put the document onto an epidiascope to display it on a large screen behind him, but gets it the wrong way up.
He adjusts it, finally. The document is a single sheet of paper with almost illegible handwriting.

You will see that it is exceedingly difficult to read, mainly because it is actually in code. Let me first provide, briefly, a context. The letter itself makes it clear that it was written in 1614, when Benjamin Carie, after an ecclesiastical career in England, had been converted to Roman Catholicism, and was living in exile, in France. It may, of course, simply have been a cautious desire not to implicate his friend in Canterbury in what was still a felony, that led Carie to write in code. At first, I could see no possible relevance to my researches on John Bale, and nearly didn't decide to decode it. But in the end I did, with some effort. Let me give you the result, in a decoded, and slightly tidied up, version:

WB puts another document on the epidiascope, which he then reads out:

'You will wonder greatly to hear from me, a sad fugitive and poor exile. My reasons for adhering to the true catholic faith are made public and I do not dwell upon them here, but since conversation with a known felon may endanger you, I take leave to use our old cipher and trust you will not have forgotten it. But my news is not of myself, dear friend, but of one whose acquaintance we had both enjoyed and whose death we have both mourned. As it now appears, mistakenly. In Cardinal P's household I have, to my astonishment and delight, encountered our long-lamented Kit of Canterbury, whose tale is almost beyond belief. He too, having turned to Rome many years hence, has been assiduously protected and secretly hidden from the vengeance of those in authority by whom he was once employed. Yet his time is now short, and in his desperate illness he fervently wishes to be recalled to your dear self and to a select few, lest the false accounts of his service to the state should continue to cloud your erstwhile love for him. Which of us will now survive the other is in doubt, and whilst my case so stands, I dare not return home again. But I cannot be altogether out of hope of giving you even better news before I die, though this sudden re-encounter has made me commit many faults in writing this very sodainly, for which I crave pardon, and cut off the rest. Benjamin C. '

The audience are gradually taking in the projected text,
and murmurs of mounting excitement are gathering around the hall.

WB waits, looking very pleased with himself.
Then he tries to place the two documents side-by-side
on the epidiascope, and makes a complete mess of it.

As he struggles, a woman, Farrell, rises to her feet in the audience
and interrupts, politely.

FARRELL

Mr Chairman, I hope you will forgive this interruption when you hear the explanation. I only intervene to save Professor Brecht, and indeed the conference, from acute embarrassment. I am Dr Farrell, the cathedral archivist, and I have to tell the conference that I am familiar with the document Professor Brecht is showing us
—and that it is, I am afraid, a forgery.

WB almost collapses on the podium. He looks distraught. Audience react variously.

DRAKE *(confused, hesitant)*:

Er, perhaps Dr Farrell, you should say a little more. Do come to the front. Please. I think we all need to hear this clearly.

Farrell goes to the podium, and nods apologetically to WB. Then addresses the conference.

FARRELL

I am sure Professor Brecht is wholly blameless in this embarrassing matter. Indeed, I must take some responsibility myself, since I have been away from the archive for some weeks, and Professor Brecht would not have had the opportunity to consult with me. I gather he obtained permission from one of the archive's younger volunteer assistants, to show the document tonight. But we are now so badly under-staffed that a volunteer helper simply could not have known the history of such a document. Indeed, few do.

DRAKE

Do go on.

FARRELL

Well, it is a strange tale of Victorian rivalry and revenge, or perhaps of comedy and capering, of malicious deceit, or maybe a harmless jape. It is not clear which.

The tale concerns two canons of the cathedral,
Arthur Stanley and James Craigie Robertson,
both canons at Canterbury in the 1850s.
Both were much interested in the history of the
cathedral and the city, but with rather different results.
Within a year or two of arriving in Canterbury,
despite spending much of his time travelling abroad,
Stanley had dashed off his *Historical Memorials of Canterbury*, which came out in 1854 and remained,
for the rest of the century and well beyond, a best-selling popular account of some of the high points
in the history of Canterbury. Especially celebrated
was his vividly dramatic recounting of the murder of
Thomas Becket. Canon Robertson, on the other hand,
who had been in Canterbury far longer, devoted his life
to rigorous scholarship, and his magnificent edition,
in seven volumes, of the *Materials for the History of Becket*
was his life's work—indeed he was still editing the final
volume when he died in 1882. By then, Stanley had
become famous as Dean Stanley of Westminster,
friend of royalty, best-selling author, celebrity cleric.
Now, let me take you back to 1864. In 1864,
both Stanley and Robertson were given academic
appointments, Stanley as Regius Professor of
Ecclesiastical History in the University of Oxford,
Robertson as Professor of Ecclesiastical History at
King's College, London, a *far* less prestigious post.
Another reason, perhaps, for Robertson to feel piqued
at his younger colleague from Canterbury.

She pauses. WB is looking deeply concerned and unhappy.
The audience is baffled, and not fully following the story.
She continues:

Now, note the date. 1864 was the 300th anniversary
of Marlowe's birth. Perhaps in a moment of rivalry,
a reaction to the different reputations they now had,
or perhaps simply as a kind of friendly joke,
Robertson composed the letter which Professor Brecht
has now uncovered. Robertson forged it beautifully —

the hand-writing, the paper, the ink, every detail, even the code is a plausible 17th century one, a simple letter transposition mode—Roberston had, after all, unlike Dean Stanley, spent his life actually working on old manuscripts. He sent the coded letter to Stanley, humbly asking for his assistance in decoding it. And obviously hoped that Stanley would rise to the bait —and make a complete fool of himself. But Stanley was quite incompetent at code-breaking so, after keeping the document for a few months, he sent it back, pleading lack of time from his new duties at Oxford. So the joke, or planned revenge, failed. And Robertson simply forgot about it. As did the archive. I came across it in Robertson's papers, many years ago. But it then disappeared. I suspect it was somehow filed with the genuine Grove papers, by a kind of conscientious mistake. End of story. Until today.

Audience is silenced.

DRAKE

Well, that all seems pretty decisive. In the circumstances, I'm not sure I have any other option than to adjourn this session of the conference.

LAURA *(sotto voce to Alan)*

And *I* think that was a brilliantly improvised *cover-up*, an instant rear-guard action by the Shakespeareans. For a start, Stanley was appointed to Oxford in 18*56*, not in 1864. He was made Dean in 1864. And I bet that document promptly gets 'mis-filed' again, and never re-surfaces—Shakespeare is saved!

ALAN *(sotto voce)*

Never trust the documents, eh?

DRAKE

Well, I might just remind delegates that there is a drinks reception on the lawn, in an hour's time. We shall all have a lot to talk about, I'm sure.

WB *(pleading)*
Can I give my paper on Bale now instead?

DRAKE
Certainly not. We are now adjourned.
No more business today.

Oligov has been having all this translated for him.
He looks bewildered.

Then he cheers up and prompts his Aide, pointing to the girl in the green dress, and leering lasciviously at her.

The Aide comes over towards the girl.

As he does so, two police officers come through the door of the hall and sternly approach Oligov.

25. EXT. EVENING. BALMY.

On the lawn outside the conference centre,
with the cathedral wonderful as a backdrop,
Alan and Laura are drinking from champagne glasses.

ALAN
You know, Laura, I have only one thing
to say to you, after today.

He begins to recite Marlowe's 'Passionate Shepherd to His Love':

Come live with me and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dale and field,
And all the craggy mountains yield.

There will we sit upon the rocks
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

LAURA

Put prosaically, are you asking me to come
and live with you in Canterbury?

ALAN

Yes. Yes. But I do have to warn you :
it's just a sleepy little city. One day is much
the same as any other.

LAURA

After today, I can hardly wait. But, my loving shepherd:

Laura recites Ralegh's 'The Nymph's Reply To The Shepherd':

If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.

Time drives the flocks from field to fold,
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold;
And Philomel becometh dumb;
The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
To wayward winter reckoning yields:
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Their exchange continues as voices-over while the end credits roll:

ALAN

There will I make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull,
Fair linèd slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold.

A belt of straw and ivy buds
With coral clasps and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my Love.

LAURA

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten,—
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,
Thy coral clasps and amber studs,
All these in me no means can move
To come to thee and be thy love.

ALAN

Thy silver dishes for thy meat
As precious as the gods do eat,
Shall on an ivory table be
Prepared each day for thee and me.

The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May-morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my Love.

LAURA

But could youth last and love still breed,
Had joys no date nor age no need,
Then these delights my mind might move
To live with thee and be thy love.

END

A film-text for pseudo-scholars.

It was the usual story, of course:
Boy meets Girl, Client hires Private Eye,
and the two tales get entangled
during a leisurely stroll around
the highlights of an ancient city.
But the mystery is 450 years old,
and seems to involve an ominous Stranger,
a forgetful German academic,
a couple of warring Russian oligarchs,
and final proof that Shakespeare was really
from Canterbury, not Stratford, after all.
So, just a normal day for a Cathedral guide
looking after an attractive American visitor.

Film-texts are not written with actual film production in mind, but use the film format for fun.
This was written for visiting friends as a guide to favourite spots in Canterbury on the occasion of the Marlowe commemorative celebrations in 2014.

New Crisis Quarterly revives the title of a short-lived periodical which published only reviews of wholly imaginary works, which their authors did not have the time to write.
NCQ books are offered in the same spirit.